stand that the exchange of data between the patient and external database systems can also be performed without requiring that the patient actually be checked-in to the facility.

[0015] More particularly, one embodiment of the invention includes a system for providing efficient access to patient data at a medical facility, the system having a self-service kiosk that has an input device operable to input data from a user, a processor and a display screen for visually providing data to the user, and a server in communication with the processor and operable to store data and selectively access data from at least one external database, wherein relevant data with respect to the patient is downloaded from one or more of the external databases via the server and provided to the user via the kiosk.

[0016] A further embodiment of the invention includes a method for efficiently exchanging data with patients at a medical facility, the method including providing one or more individual self-service kiosks operable to interface with the patients via one or more of a visual display and an audible speaker, wherein the kiosks are controlled via a processor. A method consistent with this further embodiment also includes presenting an identification card at one of the kiosks, wherein the identification card uniquely identifies an individual patient, requesting verification of certain personal information from the individual patient and accessing one or more databases to obtain medical data corresponding to the individual patient.

[0017] Another embodiment in accordance with the invention includes a self-service medical kiosk that has a display device operable to convey certain data to a patient and also request verification of other data from the patient and a processing device operable to receive data inputted by the patient and communicate with a server, wherein the medical kiosk is operable to access one or more external databases and obtain and display accessed data to the patient on the display device.

[0018] Still further, another embodiment of the invention includes a system for efficiently exchanging information with patients at a medical facility, the system having means for interacting with a patient and obtaining personal identification information about the patient, means for connecting the kiosk to one or more database systems external to the medical facility and means for verifying one or more of patient personal demographic information and patient insurance or other payer information.

[0019] As used herein "substantially", "generally", and other words of degree, are used as a relative modifier intended to indicate permissible variation from the characteristic so modified. It is not intended to be limited to the absolute value or characteristic which it modifies but rather approaching or approximating such a physical or functional characteristic.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0020] The object and features of the present invention will become more readily apparent from the following detailed description of the exemplary embodiments taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

[0021] **FIG. 1** is a block diagram illustrating a system in accordance with the present invention.

[0022] **FIG. 2** is an illustration of a single medical check-in kiosk in accordance with the present invention.

[0023] **FIG. 3** is an exemplary screen-shot representative of what an initial display might look like, in accordance with the present invention.

[0024] **FIG. 4** is an exemplary screen-shot representative of when the system queries a patient about contact information, in accordance with the present invention.

[0025] **FIG. 5** is an exemplary screen-shot representative of what the display might look like when the system queries the patient about insurance coverage information, in accordance with the present invention.

[0026] **FIG. 6** is an exemplary screen-shot representative of what the display might look like when the system informs the patient about scheduled appointments, in accordance with the present invention.

[0027] **FIG. 7** is an exemplary screen-shot representative of what the display might look like when the system informs the patient about suggested preventive healthcare issues, in accordance with the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF ILLUSTRATIVE, NON-LIMITING EMBODIMENTS

[0028] Exemplary, non-limiting, embodiments of the present invention are discussed in detail below. While specific configurations are discussed to provide a clear understanding, it should be understood that the specific embodiments and their respective configurations are provided for illustration purposes only. A person skilled in the relevant art will recognize that other configurations may be used without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

[0029] One exemplary embodiment of the invention includes a number of self-service patient check-in and medical ailment/disease preventive service medical kiosks. A more detailed view of an exemplary embodiment of a self-service kiosk in accordance with the present invention is illustrated in **FIG. 2**.

[0030] Referring to **FIG. 1**, in accordance with one embodiment, a system employing a number of individual kiosks is provided. The check-in kiosks, **10***a*-**10***n*, are each connected in a Local Area network (LAN) configuration with a server **20** which is, in turn, connected via two-way communications links, to various databases (BD**1** . . . DBn). The LAN can be a wireless LAN (WLAN) or it can use cables to interconnect each device using Ethernet, i.e., in accordance with the IEEE 802.3 standard, or other suitable cabling and data delivery technology. The connection from the server **20** to the legacy database systems, DB**1** . . . DBn, can be made via a web-based database query system such as Oracle®, which a relational database management system, RDBMS, copyrighted by Oracle Corporation of Redwood Shores, Calif., or any other suitable communication link.

[0031] Kiosks **10***a*-**10***n* are located, for example, in the reception area of a medical facility, such as a hospital, clinic, doctor's office, etc. When a patient (not illustrated) enters a facility that is equipped with a system according to the present invention, the patient is greeted by a number of individual self-service kiosks, each spaced apart from one another in order to afford the patient a certain level of privacy as he or she answers personal questions displayed on